



## NEW SHERIDAN HOTEL

### *Hotel History*

Established in 1891 when Telluride was only four years old, the New Sheridan Hotel has been welcoming guests for well over one hundred years. Like the town itself, the hotel was built with riches from gold and silver strikes in the surrounding San Juan Mountains. The original Sheridan Hotel was a three-story wooden frame structure, erected at 233 West Colorado Avenue directly east of the Courthouse. Three years later, in 1894, the original building was destroyed by fire. The present brick building at 231 West Colorado Avenue was erected next door to the burnt lot. The newly constructed, three-story building was completed in 1895 and reopened as the New Sheridan Hotel, this time in brick. Thus, the Sheridan has been "new" since 1895.

The early days of the New Sheridan Hotel saw it blossom as the growing town's social center. The Continental Room Restaurant boasted sixteen velvet-lined, curtained booths, each equipped with a button for discreetly summoning the waiter only when needed. The service and cuisine of the adjoining American Room was said to have rivaled the Brown Palace in Denver. It is said, it was once possible for a man of the times to enjoy dinner with his mistress seated in the Continental Room, and his wife in the American Room, both at the same time. Frequently, a small trio or quartet played from a discreet mezzanine in the bar where they could play for an audience including guests of both dining rooms and the bar simultaneously if both doors were open.

The site of the original Sheridan Hotel remained vacant for five years. A two-story brick addition was built in 1899, but for a second time it was destroyed by fire. No other attempts were made to rebuild on the original site for nearly a century, and the land appears in many historic photos as a grassy yard in front of the adjoining Sheridan Opera House. The American Room still retains two west-facing windows, now mirrored, that once looked out onto the grass of the original hotel site.

The existing two-story building that houses the New Sheridan Chop House, additional hotel rooms and a sun deck above, was not constructed until 1994 on the site of the original hotel. Styled so closely to the architecture of the 1895 building next door, the two are nearly indistinguishable.

Also in 1994, the entire hotel facility underwent its first major renovation in a hundred years. What had slowly become a run-down miner's hostel over the years was magically restored into the glowing centerpiece it had once been. Monthly rentals, bunk-bed rooms and community bathrooms were stripped and recreated as 26 luxury hotel rooms and suites, complete with Victorian era antiques. In 2000, the hotel became a member of the National Trust for Historic Hotels of America.

The hotel received further upgrades during a second renovation that was completed in late 2008. Prior to initiating the multi-million dollar renovation, hotel management consulted with historic



architecture experts and the Telluride Historic and Architectural Review Commission over a several-year period in order to develop plans that would preserve, and in some cases enhance, the property's historic integrity, architecture and ambience. Through the renovation, internationally renowned designer Nina Campbell created individual designs for each guest room. Rooms received indulgent touches such as 100 percent Egyptian cotton sheets and towels, heated bathroom floors, walk-in closets, iPod docking stations, LCD flat screen televisions, high-speed Internet access and plush robes. The renovations eliminated the shared bathrooms that were added to several floors three decades ago, returning private bathrooms to all guest rooms, and extensive soundproofing was also added. The renovation also brought the addition of the Parlor – a main street-style café – and an expansion of the Chop House restaurant.

The New Sheridan Bar remains much as it was when it opened in 1895. The handsomely carved mahogany front bar, wall paneling, room dividers with their spectacular beveled and lead glass panels, and many of the ornate light fixtures are among the original appointments. For a brief period early in the 1900s, the New Sheridan Bar was converted into a grocery store (H.H. Walrod & Co. Grocers) when it became the target of a boycott by local miners during underground labor unrest. The hotel, bar and restaurants were owned at the time by the Sheridan Mines Company. When the labor disputes settled, the old saloon reverted to its proper function and has remained a bar to the present day. Even during Prohibition, liquor service was curtailed, but not altogether eliminated.

Built in 1914 adjacent to the hotel, the Sheridan Opera House is a beautiful example of a Victorian jewel-box theatre, with its proscenium arch framed in a perpetual warm amber glow of lights, and a Venetian pastoral scene painted on the hand-rolled grand drape. The distinctive interior and red velvet auditorium chairs have the uncanny ability to immediately transport the visitor to an era of gaslights and melodrama. The Opera House is still active today and remains at the heart of Telluride's art and cultural community as a movie house, fine art theatre, dance hall, and festival space.

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February 24, 1980

*Before long, (in the 1890s) the Sheridan's American Room became known as one of the best places to dine in Colorado. The owners declared that 'anything available at the Brown Palace in Denver is available at the Sheridan.' When one customer teased that the Brown Palace could furnish possum, it took the Sheridan kitchen staff only a few hours to come up with a juicy possum steak...*

*Overall, the outside appearance of the New Sheridan Hotel was dull. But, once a visitor stepped into the richly paneled lobby, ate in the luxurious American Room, had a drink at the*



*bar, and finally found his way to one of the hotel's superb rooms, he knew that all of the rumors he had heard about the luxurious Sheridan were true...*

*One of the Sheridan's best known guests was William Jennings Bryan, three times an unsuccessful candidate for president... The hotel staff erected a large wooden stage at the front of the hotel and decorated it with stars and stripes. All Bryan had to do was step out of the window of his second story room onto the platform and start his political oratory. (Bryan's speech was known as the Cross of Gold Speech, debating the proposed change of silver to gold standard. Throughout the hotel's history, famous guests including Sara Bernhardt, Lillian Gish, Jimmy Stewart and Arlo Guthrie have taken their comfort here, and more recent celebrity visitors have included Bob Dylan, Meryl Streep, Penelope Cruz, Jerry Seinfeld and Sean Penn.*

*One dirty spot on the Sheridan's clean record occurred in the early 1900s. A gigantic mudslide caused by heavy spring rains (which caused Cornet Falls & Creek to burst) swept through Telluride. (Homes were pushed clear off their foundations on fashionable North Oak Street and washed as much as three city blocks straight downhill.) The Sheridan's lobby was filled with mud almost to the eight-foot mark. The slide occurred so fast that supposedly the mud swept away a table even as a man sat eating behind it in the American Room.*

*The Sheridan has been one of Colorado's most resilient hotels, surviving through lean times and thriving in prosperity.*

For more information on Telluride's history, including the New Sheridan Hotel, recommended books include: [Telluride, From Pick to Powder](#) which chronicles the town's rowdy early days and its transition from sleepy mining town to ski resort. [Tomboy Bride](#) offers a historical account of life in local mining camps by Harriet Fish Backus. Both are available at local bookstores and the Wilkinson Public Library.

With the mission of protecting the irreplaceable, The New Sheridan Hotel is a proud member of the National Trust for Historic Hotels of America and is dedicated to faithfully maintaining the historic integrity, architecture and ambience of the hotel into the future.